

## A PRELIMINARY LIST OF THE BIRDS OF YAKIMA COUNTY, WASHINGTON.

BY WM. LEON DAWSON.

Yakima county, in south-central Washington, attracts attention as containing one of the most fertile and salubrious sections in the entire state. The county measures, approximately, fifty by one hundred and twenty miles, but the cultivated land lies almost exclusively along the Yakima river and in those tributary valleys which center in or near the city of North Yakima. The eastern and south eastern portion, or greater half of the county, consists of arid and treeless plains interrupted by frequent low mountain ranges of Columbian lava. The western third is increasingly mountainous and correspondingly timbered, including, as it does, Mt. Adams, and the eastern approaches of Mt. Rainier.

As we should expect, therefore, the larger portion of the county presents a fauna which is strictly Upper Sonoran; but from there westward a transition is made to the Boreal fauna; and in the extreme west a junction must be in some way effected with the saturated forms of Puget Sound.

Our interest, however, centers in a typical valley in the most favored agricultural region, the middle-northern. The Ahtanum valley stretches westward from North Yakima between barren hills for a distance of some twenty miles. At this point the stream forks. Its barriers rise to the dignity of mountains. Evergreen timber begins and increases in density until we are lost in the depths of the higher ranges. The valley proper is abundantly watered, both naturally and artificially. The characteristic covers for birds are, therefore, furnished by willow and rose thickets, bounding the tiny, sub-divided streams; high, open groves, or "timber cultures" containing poplars and quaking asps; occasional swamps, or "slews;" and by the universal setting of sage-brush.

Amid these surroundings, and at a point about eight miles up the valley, the writer lived three years—'85-87, and

'99-'00—and spent parts of four spring seasons beside. It was during the latest residence of a year, '99-'00, that the best opportunities for observation were afforded. It was here upon our "Five Acres of Bird-land," reported in THE WILSON BULLETIN, No. 32, that I recorded 63 species of birds in the nine months of a year, exclusive of spring. This little spot, with its singularly varied topography, is referred to in the following notes, for lack of a more comprehensive name, as "the demesne." From here, also, I was enabled to make frequent trips and sallies, sometimes to the "South Range" of hills, sometimes to the timbered mountains, and once to the narrow paradise of the Lower Yakima.

On the whole, birds are not abundant in the Yakima country, either in number of species or individuals. The best strictly local horizon for a day comprised only 35 species; while the best county horizon, taken on a trip from Ah-tanum to the Yakima Soda Springs, included but 50 species. The migrations are not very conspicuous. The resident birds slip into their places rather quietly; while birds known to be common further north are seldom seen as they move to and fro.

Of especial note, however, are the changes which have taken place in the status of different species. A period of observation covering roughly fifteen years has witnessed many important modifications in the distribution of birds. Decrease has been apparent in the hawks and owls, except the Burrowing Owl, and in the game birds, such as ducks, geese, grouse and curlews. But this has been offset by a most gratifying and unmistakable increase among the Passerine birds, and those which can in any way profit by civilization. Among this number may be cited the Arkansas Kingbird, Say's Pewee, Bullock's Oriole, Rusty Song Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Robin and others. It would seem probable that certain species, as Cowbird and Cliff Swallow, have invaded the region solely because of the advent of man.

The following list is to be understood as strictly prelimi-

nary, a working basis for future investigation, and necessarily incomplete as yet because of the immense territory to be covered:

1. *Sterna hirundo*. Common Tern.—A solitary bird was seen at Union Gap August 19, 1899.

2. *Merganser serrator*. Red-breasted Merganser.—Some sixteen years ago I caught a bird asleep beside a pool of the Ahtanum creek.

3. *Lophodytes cucullatus*. Hooded Merganser.—One shot on Minner's pond. Others reported.

4. *Anas boschas*. Mallard. The common duck.—Breeds.

5. *Nettion carolinensis*. Green-winged Teal.—Fairly common.

6. *Querquedula cyanoptera*. Cinnamon Teal.—Two records.

7. *Erismatura jamaicensis*. Ruddy Duck.—One record, Minner's pond, October 26, 1899.

8. *Branta canadensis occidentalis*. White-cheeked Goose.—The common goose. Breeds sparingly.

9. *Ardea herodias*. Great Blue Heron.—Not common.

10. *Grus mexicana*. Sandhill Crane.—Not common except during migrations. A single bird was once observed wading in a shallow of the Yakima river. The bird behaved as awkwardly as a sore-footed Tommy Atkins, and once he actually fell into the water.

11. *Rallus virginianus*. Virginia Rail.—This bird and the next are to be found in any considerable tule swamp.

12. *Porzana carolina*. Sora.

13. *Gallinago delicata*. Wilson's Snipe.—Common. Resident.

14. *Tringa baridii*. Baird's Sandpiper.—An extensive tour of the country during the month of August developed the presence of multitudes of these birds. Singly or in small groups they frequent every wayside plash and overflowing irrigating ditch.

15. *Tringa minutilla*. Least Sandpiper.—A single flock once swept over the demesne, piping loudly.

16. *Totanus melanoleucus*. Greater Yellow-legs.—By the side of a farm-yard pond I once watched a bird which seemed rather to enjoy company so long as you didn't actually step on him. With immaculate under-garments rolled tightly above each knee, he would adventure to wade around you rather than to fly out of your way.

17. *Actitis macularia*. Spotted Sandpiper.—Regular but not common.

18. *Numenius longirostris*. Long-billed Curlew.—Not uncommon. Breeds.

19. *Aegialitis vocifera*. Killdeer.—Common.

20. *Canachites franklinii*. Franklin's Grouse.—The "Blue Grouse" is the common bird of the lower mountain ranges.

21. *Bonasa umbellus togata*. Canadian Ruffed Grouse.—Of re-

stricted range. Found commonly in the bottom of valleys in the lower slopes.

22. *Pedioecetes phasianellus columbianus*. Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse.—The local "Prairie Chicken" was once abundant, but is falling off in numbers every year. Where they are able to hold their own at all, it is in the oldest settled parts where food is plentiful and some protection afforded.

23. *Centrocercus urophasianus*. Sage Grouse.—Sixteen years ago a neighbor boy showed me a nest of Sage Hen's eggs from which I was allowed to abstract "just one." The remainder were destined in due season for a domestic career. The parent bird returned within an hour, and, smelling the odor of humans, ruthlessly destroyed the tainted eggs. It served us jolly well right, too: those eggs should have been appropriated in the name of science—neighbor to the contrary notwithstanding. Hold! I forget! He was bigger than I. The Sage Grouse of the Yakima is rapidly nearing extinction. I saw only one small flock during my last year's residence.

24. *Zenaidura macroura*. Mourning Dove.—Abundant.

25. *Cathartes aura*. Turkey Vulture.—Not uncommon. Nests in caves and crevices of the Natchez cliffs and elsewhere.

26. *Circus hudsonius*. Marsh Hawk.—Perhaps the commonest hawk twenty years ago. The rustic has waged a witless warfare against it, and is reaping a well deserved harvest of "ground squirrels" in consequence.

27. *Accipiter velox*. Sharp-shinned Hawk.—Not uncommon.

28. *Buteo borealis calurus*. Western Red-tail.—The species was unknown to me during my earlier residence, but I saw one bird on the Lower Yakima in the summer of '99.

29. *Buteo swainsonii*. Swainson's Hawk.—All the Buteos are rare here in Yakima, but this is probably the commonest one.

30. *Archibuteo lagopus sancti-johannis*. American Rough-legged Hawk.—Three individuals clearly distinguished April 3, 1900.

31. *Archibuteo ferrugineus*. Ferruginous Rough-leg.—No considerable walk or ride over the barren foot-hills is complete without a glimpse of these majestic birds.

32. *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*. Bald Eagle.—I have a record of a solitary eagle guarding his nest on the Yakima river, near Snipe's mountain. Also a "yard record" for March 5, 1900. The bird was, of course, flying overhead.

33. *Falco mexicanus*. Prairie Falcon.—Not uncommon when once the eyes have been opened, but it is a bird of which *vulgus homo* knows nothing. It is to be seen most frequently about the summits of the untimbered ranges.

34. *Falco peregrinus anatum*. Duck Hawk.—While riding along at the head of a funeral procession, where I didn't care to crane my neck too curiously, I saw a Peregrine Falcon make a wanton swoop of a hundred yards or so and then go mincing off like a

skittish horse at sight of the unwonted spectacle. There is only one Peregrine.

35. *Falco columbarius*. Pigeon Hawk.—Several clear records, including one yard record, September 18, 1899.

36. *Falco sparverius deserticolus*. Desert Sparrow Hawk.—Of five hawks in sight at once four are bound to be Sparrows.

37. *Asio wilsonianus*. American Long-eared Owl.—Common. Nests.

38. *Asio accipitrinus*. Short-eared Owl.—One record of several seen in the lower Moxee swamp.

39. *Megascops asio macfarlanei*. MacFarlane's Screech Owl.—Quite rare. Two yard records.

40. *Bubo virginianus arcticus*. Arctic Horned Owl.—Fairly common fifteen years ago. None seen in '99-'00.

41. *Speotyto cunicularia hypogaea*. Burrowing Owl.—Abundant, and manifestly increasing. It is well, since farmers will kill hawks indiscriminately.

42. *Glaucidium gnoma californicum*. California Pygmy Owl.—One specimen shot during the winter of '86-'7, the only one ever seen.

43. *Ceryle alcyon*. Belted Kingfisher. Common.

44. *Dryobates pubescens gairdnerii*. Gairdner's Woodpecker.—Yard record and others. Not common.

45. *Xenopicus albolarvatus*. White-headed Woodpecker.—Not rare in the mountains.

46. *Sphyrapicus thyroideus*. Williamson's Sapsucker.—The county record was made August 9, 1899, when a female was closely studied at the Yakima Soda Springs.

47. *Melanerpes torquatus*. Lewis's Woodpecker.—The Black Woodpecker was rare a dozen years ago except along the upper reaches of the Yakima river. Its fondness for fruit has, however, given it a general distribution of late, and a notable increase in numbers.

48. *Colaptes cafer*. Red-shafted Flicker.—Owing to the scarcity of timber this bird has taken to public and vacant buildings, especially school houses, and because of his destructiveness to the woodwork a price is often put upon his head.

49. *Phalaenoptilus nuttallii*. Poor-will.—Among the sweetest memories of boyhood is the plaintive whistling of this bird along about milking time. A few still linger, but it does not take kindly to the ways of civilization.

50. *Chordeiles virginianus henryi*. Western Nighthawk.—Common. In the lower Ahtanum valley I have seen upwards of 200 of them gyrating, swallow fashion, within the limits of a single pasture.

51. *Chaetura vauxii*. Vaux's Swift.—Two seen in a mountain valley, the north fork of the Ahtanum.

52. *Stellula calliope*. Calliope Hummer.—A dubious identification

of a couple of birds seen in the demesne. Humming-birds are very rare in the Yakima country.

53. *Tyrannus tyrannus*. Kingbird.—Not common. A quiet bird beside his garrulous cousin.

54. *Tyrannus verticalis*. Arkansas kingbird.—Common. On the increase.

55. *Sayornis saya*. Say's Phoebe.—I did not make the acquaintance of this bird during my first residence of two years, '86-'87. The first bird was seen in a Tampico barn in the spring of 1891. Since then it has increased rapidly, until it is now the presiding genius of every hop-house (dryer) and barn. A typical spring record is February 20, 1900.

56. *Contopus richardsonii*. Western Wood Pewee.—Not very common. A bird of marked local attachments, and probably on the increase.

57. *Empidonax hammondi*. Hammond's Flycatcher.—If one may believe anything at all about these very difficult "gnat-kings," Hammond's is the common bird and the noisiest of the lot. In the "spring" migration of 1899 he arrived on June 14, and very presently set up housekeeping. I found his nest on the 27th. On July 4th it contained one egg, and on July 10th still only two, which I took. The eggs in this case were not white but creamy, with scattered spots of reddish-brown, much like a Western Wood Pewee's. Weary! weary! but those Empidonaces are a most ungetatable lot, the tricksiest sprites in nature.

58. *Octocoris alpestris leucolaema*. Pallid Horned Lark.—The winter birds, which are not common, are believed to belong to this sub-species.

59. *Otocoris alpestris merrilli*. Dusky Horned Lark.—Common; especially so on the summits of the treeless ranges, where it breeds freely.

60. *Pica pica hudsonica*. American Magpie.—The most badly wanted bird of the Yakima. Incessant persecutions have only produced additional convolutions in the cerebral hemispheres of Magpie's brain, and the bird still has a fighting chance for life. In my little day I have semi-officially inspected something over a hundred fortifications which this bird was pleased to erect for the defense of his children.

61. *Cyanocitta stelleri annectens*. Black-headed Jay.—Common in the evergreen timber. Rare below.

62. *Corvus americanus*. American Crow.—An old residenter with many strange habits, but no "characters" differing from the eastern bird.

63. *Nucifraga columbiana*. Clarke's Nutcracker.—Not rare in heavy timber.

64. *Molothrus ater*. Cowbird.—Unknown till recently.

65. *Agelaius phoeniceus*. Red-winged Blackbird.—Fairly common.

66. *Sturnella magna neglecta*. Western Meadow Lark.—Common.

The bird with the merry heart which maketh a glad countenance.

67. *Icterus bullocki*. Bullock's Oriole.—Common. Increasing.
68. *Scolecophagus cyanocephalus*. Brewer's Blackbird.—One of the autochthones. Omnipresent and not justly complained of.
69. *Loxia curvirostra minor*. American Crossbill.—Resident in mountains.
70. *Loxia leucoptera*. White-winged Crossbill.—One record, May 15, 1891.
71. *Acanthis linaria*. Redpoll.—Swarms in winter.
72. *Astragalinus tristis*. American Goldfinch.—Fairly common.
73. *Spinus pinus*. Pine Siskin.—Noted during my last year's residence throughout the year, except in winter. Where and when they breed is the mystery, since they are back by the middle of March and appear in care-free troops the rest of the time.
74. *Passerina nivalis*. Snowflake.—Unmistakably heard once, November 4, 1899.
75. *Poocetes gramineus confinis*. Western Vesper Sparrow.—Fairly common.
76. *Chondestes grammacus strigatus*. Western Lark Sparrow.—Not very common. Perhaps increasing.
77. *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambellii*. Intermediate Sparrow.—Swarms through the country during migration, and probably remains sparingly to breed.
78. *Spizella monticola ochracea*. Western Tree Sparrow.—Once recorded a flock of 25, on February 17, 1900, in the Ahtanum valley.
79. *Spizella socialis arizonae*. Western Chipping Sparrow.—Universally but sparingly distributed up to and a little beyond pine timber.
80. *Spizella breweri*. Brewer's Sparrow.—The sage wastes in spring and summer fairly teem with these sprightly and tuneful sparrows. Under their zealous ministrations the desert is transformed into a passable paradise of song.
81. *Junco hyemalis connectens*. Shufeldt's Junco.—Relying upon the example of Mr. Rathbun ("The Auk," April, 1902, p. 137), I set down the breeding bird of the timbered mountains as *J. h. connectens*. The winter birds of the lower valleys belong probably to the next sub-species.
82. *Junco hyemalis oregonus*. Oregon Junco.—Common in winter.
83. *Amphispiza belli nevadensis*. Sage Sparrow.—Noted only during the spring of 1895, when one specimen, a singing male, was taken from a group of resident birds.
84. *Melospiza melodia morphna*. Rusty Song Sparrow.—Common resident. The Yakima Song Sparrow may prove to have closer affinities with *M. m. merrilli*, or even to deserve separate elaboration.
85. *Pipilo maculatus megalonyx*. Spurred Towhee.—Common. The Towhee of eastern Washington will fall an easy victim to the first species hunter with a gun.

86. *Zamelodia melanocphala*. Black-headed Grosbeak.—Not common. Yard record.

87. *Cyanospiza amoena*. Lazuli Bunting.—A common and delightful songster.

88. *Piranga ludoviciana*. Louisiana Tanager.—Fairly common, especially in pine timber.

89. *Petrochelidon lunifrons*. Cliff Swallow.—Time was when the only Cliff Swallows known to the county were to be found about the old school house at Yakima City. Since then they have become widely but not universally distributed.

90. *Hirundo erythrogaster*. Barn Swallow.—A familiar but not abundant breeding bird.

91. *Tachycineta bicolor*. Tree Swallow.—Not common.

92. *Tachycineta thalassina*. Violet-green Swallow.—Found only, as yet, in the mountains and about the wilder basaltic cliffs. They throng the narrow gorge of the Upper Yakima.

93. *Clivicola riparia*. Bank Swallow.—Common.

94. *Ampelis cedrorum*. Cedar Waxwing.—An invariable accompaniment of Yakima cherries, in season.

95. *Lanius borealis*. Northern Shrike.—Common in winter.

96. *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides*. White-rumped Shrike.—Rather rare. Breeds.

97. *Vireo gilvus*. Warbling Vireo.—Fairly common.

98. *Vireo flavifrons*. Yellow-throated Vireo.—An unmistakable member of this species was narrowly scrutinized in a quaking asp grove of the middle Ahtanum, May 12, 1895.

99. *Vireo solitarius cassini*. Cassin's Vireo.—A characteristic bird of groves and timber cultures.

100. *Helminthophila celata lutescens*. Lutescent Warbler.—Common summer resident.

101. *Dendroica aestiva*. Yellow Warbler.—Abundant.

102. *Dendroica coronata*. Myrtle Warbler.—One record, April 30, 1891.

103. *Dendroica auduboni*. Audubon's Warbler.—Abundant during migrations; probably breeds in the mountains. The *avant courier* for 1900 appeared March 11th. The bulk of the species passed through a month later.

104. *Dendroica townsendi*. Townsend's Warbler.—A late migrant. They thronged my trees on June 5, 1899. One returned, still singing, on August 23rd.

105. *Geothlypis tolmiei*. Macgillivray's Warbler.—A familiar inhabitant of brushy tangles.

106. *Geothlypis trichas occidentalis*. Western Yellow-throat.—Common.

107. *Icteria virens longicauda*. Long-tailed Chat.—A brilliant and much cherished performer. Happy is the grove that boasts a pair of these wariest of singers.



108. *Wilsonia pusilla pileolata*. Pileolated Warbler.—Common during migrations. I have not yet found it breeding.

109. *Anthus pensilvanicus*. American Pipit.—Abundant during migrations.

110. *Cinclus mexicanus*. American Dipper.—Found sparingly on the larger and wilder streams.

111. *Oroscoptes montanus*. Sage Thrasher.—The peerless singer of the open sage. His kingdom is being taken away from him, but his laurels none can destroy.

112. *Salpinctes obsoletus*. Rock Wren.—Found occasionally on the lava ranges.

113. *Troglodytes aedon aztecus*. Western House Wren.—One record, May 13, 1895.

114. *Cistothorus palustris paludicola*. Tule Wren.—Several seen in lower Moxee swamp.

115. *Sitta canadensis*. Red-breasted Nuthatch.—Not uncommon during migrations. Doubtless breeds in the mountains.

116. *Parus atricapillus occidentalis*. Oregon Chickadee.—Common resident.

117. *Parus gambeli*. Mountain Chickadee.—One record, May 15, 1891. Probably not uncommon in pine timber.

118. *Regulus satrapa olivaceus*. Western Golden crowned Kinglet.—Winter resident in lower valleys. Probably breeds in mountains.

119. *Regulus calendula*. Ruby-crowned Kinglet.—Found only during migrations.

120. *Hylocichla ustulatus*. Russet-backed Thrush.—An omnipresent bird of river-side, thicket and grove.

121. *Merula migratoria propinqua*. Western Robin.—Common.

122. *Sialia mexicana occidentalis*. Western Bluebird.—Only once seen in the Ahtanum valley, October 23, 1899.

123. *Sialia arctica*. Mountain Bluebird.—Breeds sparingly in the mountains and is only occasionally seen in the lower valleys.

To this may very properly be appended a brief list of those birds of which no record has been made, but which may be regarded as morally certain to occur within the limits of the county. The list is purposely moderate:

Western Grebe.	Pileated Woodpecker.
Holboell's Grebe.	Oregon Jay.
Loon.	Cassin's Purple Finch.
American Golden-eye.	Rough-winged Swallow.
Buffedhead.	Calaveras Warbler.
Hutchin's Goose.	Hermit Warbler.
American Coot.	Western Winter Wren.
Sooty Grouse.	California Creeper.
Golden Eagle.	Slender-billed Nuthatch.
Red-breasted Sapsucker.	Pygmy Nuthatch.